

# Character Class

## Beguiler -- Master of Deception

By Skip Williams



Characters with a talent for living by their wits hold a special appeal for the right kind of player. The beguiler offers a wealth of options for players who have the gift of blarney (or who would like to play a character with a honey tongue). A beguiler need not be a sweet talker. Your beguiler could be a cunning smuggler, cool diplomat, fiery revolutionary, or even a sneak thief.



### Assets

The beguiler relies mostly on spells that cloud the mind and fool the senses. The beguiler also excels at the unexpected magical attack. Here's a brief list of things you'll have going for you when you choose a beguiler:

- **Spells:** Beguilers cast arcane spells from a short, specialized list that includes many enchantment and illusion spells, plus a smattering of other spells. Most of the beguiler's spells grant him power over other creatures or create false sensations. Other beguiler spells bolster the character's potential for stealth, deception, and personal defense.

At 3rd level and every 4th level thereafter, a beguiler can add a single sorcerer/wizard spell from the enchantment or illusion school to his class spell list. This allows you to personalize your beguiler's spell list somewhat.

- **Good Will Saves:** A beguiler uses the best progression for Will saves (see Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). This helps the beguiler resist most effects that attack or fool his mind, assault his spirit, or distort his senses. A beguiler excels at enchantments and illusions and also boasts good defenses against such assaults.
- **Fair Hit Points:** A beguiler has 6-sided hit dice, which generate a decent hit point total for an arcane spellcaster.
- **Fair Armor Class:** Beguilers are proficient with light armor but not with shields. Light armor does not impose an arcane spell failure chance on beguiler spells (arcane spells you have from another class don't get this benefit from the beguiler class). Light armor isn't great protection, but it gives you a decent Armor Class for an arcane spellcaster.

- **Fair Weapon Selection:** The beguiler is proficient with simple weapons and with the hand crossbow, rapier, shortbow, and short sword. The selection of weaponry open to you gives you plenty of offensive options for those times when you can't rely on your spells.
- **Excellent Skill Points:** Beguilers receive six skill points per level, more than almost any other character. Beguilers also tend to have high Intelligence scores (because Intelligence governs their spellcasting ability), which boosts their skill points even higher.
- **Broad Skill Selection:** Beguilers have a long list of class skills that improve their persuasiveness, stealth, mobility, erudition, perception, and ability to manipulate objects. The wide array of skills available coupled with the beguiler's abundant skill points allows you to master several different sorts of tasks, from dungeoneering to intelligence gathering.
- **Spontaneous Spells:** As with any spellcaster, a beguiler can cast only a limited number of spells each day -- a beguiler, however, can cast any spell from his class spell list (and a small number anytime he likes, so long as he has not exceeded his daily limit)
- **Trapfinding:** A beguiler can use the Search skill to locate both magical and nonmagical traps, which can prove handy when dungeon delving or engaging in more overtly larcenous activities.
- **Cloaked Casting:** Starting at 2nd level, your spells become more effective when you catch a foe unaware. The save DC (if any) for a beguiler spell improves by +1 if you cast it at a foe who would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC against your attacks.

At 8th level, you also gain a +2 on rolls you make to overcome a foe's spell resistance when you catch him unaware with a beguiler spell.

At 14th level, the save DC increase from this feature rises to +2.

At 20th level, you automatically overcome any spell resistance a foe has when you catch him unaware with a beguiler spell.

- **Surprise Casting:** Also starting at 2nd level, a beguiler can use the Bluff skill to feint in melee combat. After a successful feint, your subject is denied a Dexterity bonus against any spell you cast as well as any melee attack you make. To get the benefit, you must remain in melee with your foe, and you must make a melee attack or cast a spell on or before your next turn after the feint.  
  
Starting at 6th level, a beguiler can feint in melee as a move action rather than a standard action. If you also have the Improved Feint feat, this power allows you to feint as a swift action.
- **Bonus Feats:** At 5th level, a beguiler gains Silent Spell as a bonus feat. At 10th level, a beguiler gains Still Spell as a bonus feat.

## Weaknesses

A beguiler cannot do everything well. Here are a few drawbacks with which every beguiler must contend --

- **Poor Fortitude and Reflex saves:** Beguilers have the worst progression for both Fortitude and Reflex save (see Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). Beguilers aren't good at getting out of the way when things get rough or at withstanding assaults on their bodies.
- **Poor Attack Bonus:** A beguiler's base attack bonus is +1 per two beguiler levels, which is the worst in the

game. When a beguiler must rely on physical attacks (which can happen fairly often -- see next point), success is far from guaranteed.

- **Extremely Limited Spell Choices:** A beguiler is limited to the short list of spells given in the class description. The advanced learning class feature allows you to add a spell to your available list at 3rd level and every four levels thereafter, but that's a long wait to choose a spell you like. When you finally get the chance to personalize your spell list, you must choose a sorcerer/wizard spell of the enchantment or illusion school. This means you can't shake the class's focus on spells that affect the mind or the senses.

## Playing a Classy Beguiler

People who play great beguilers usually keep the following in mind.

### Prepare Ahead of Time

You excel at meeting challenges with what you have at hand (and in your head). Still, a little forethought can go a long way.

Start by carefully considering your skill selection. Choose at least six skills that either fit your character concept or that you know will prove useful (or both). For example, if you plan to play your beguiler as a tomb breaker, explorer, or spy, concentrate on skills that deal with movement, stealth, and perception. Your list of skills might include Disable Device, Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Search, and Spot. If your tastes lean more toward manipulating or fooling other creatures, your skill selection should reflect that. Such a skill list could include Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Gather Information, Sense Motive, and a Knowledge skill.

Whatever your character concept, you'll need plenty of ranks in Bluff and Concentration to make the best use of your cloaked casting and surprise casting class features. When choosing skills, remain aware of your class spell list. Remember that you can cast any spell from the list anytime you like -- your level and daily spell allotment permitting. The Hide skill, for example, is great for setting up ambushes or simply disappearing when things turn sour. When you reach 4th level, however, you can cast *invisibility* several times a day, which makes ranks in the Hide skill less important unless you plan to disappear fairly often. It also pays to consider how your skills interact with each other. For example, if you want to use the Hide skill to get out of a tight spot, you'll probably need to distract your foe or foes with a Bluff check before you can get out of sight.

Once you've settled on your skill list, be ready to use spells that enhance your capabilities or cover gaps in your abilities. As noted earlier, *invisibility* spells can make up for a lack of Hide ranks. Your spell list, however, is crammed with things that can help you when your skills prove lacking. For example, a *comprehend languages* spell is an excellent stand-in for a Decipher Script check, and an *expeditious retreat* spell indirectly improves your jumping ability (by boosting your speed).

### Apply Advanced Learning Wisely

Your advanced learning class feature offers excellent opportunities to customize your spell list and make it your own. Never choose a new spell lightly. Always keep your character concept in mind, and also look for ways to fill gaps in your capabilities.

As noted earlier, advanced learning allows you to add one sorcerer/wizard spell from the enchantment or illusion schools to your class spell list when you reach 3rd, 7th, 11th, 15th, and 19th level. You also must be able to cast the spell you choose as a beguiler. For example, you can cast only 1st level spells as a 3rd-level beguiler, so only 1st level spells (and 0-level spells) are available to you through advanced learning when you reach 3rd level. Choices worth considering at 3rd level include the ventriloquism spell from the *Player's Handbook* (good for beguilers with a taste for trickery), the *whelm* spell from *Player's Handbook II* (good for combat), and *serene*

*visage* from the *Spell Compendium* (useful anytime you make a Bluff check). As you rise in level, be on the lookout for spells that expand your capabilities and that allow you to deal with mindless or unliving foes that are immune to most of your class spells. Illusion spells from the shadow subschool are great choices because they produce quasi-real effects that you can use in many ways. The various *shadow conjuration* spells, for example, allow you to produce shadow allies or servants. The various *shadow evocation* spells, on the other hand, expand your ability to attack a wide range of foes (and to damage objects).

## Stay On Top of the Action

Your penchant for deception and the unexpected maneuver is very likely to be frustrated repeatedly unless you constantly think ahead during adventures. For example, it's very difficult to finesse someone who's warding off sword blows and *fireball* spells. Try to anticipate where the action is headed and be ready to seize opportunities to use your skills or spells before events overtake you.

Likewise, your class spell list is full of excellent defensive spells such as *mirror image*, *displacement*, and *repulsion* that can keep you safe in a battle. It pays to cast these spells before combat begins whenever you can. Otherwise, you'll be faced with a choice between acting decisively at the beginning of a battle or taking a moment to protect yourself and most likely missing a chance to use your class features to best effect.

You cannot seize opportunities while skulking around in the back of the party. You don't have the Armor Class or the hit point to walk in the party's front rank all the time, but try to stay where things are most likely to happen -- in the second rank when the party is on the move. Don't be afraid to forge ahead or look around when the pace slows or your allies dawdle a bit.

## Minimize Your Risks

You can go too far with the advice in the previous section. It's easy to find more trouble than you can handle if you get too far ahead of your allies, and your friends won't like it a bit if you repeatedly plunge them into battles they can barely handle in your eagerness to land the first blow in a fight. Remember that you're on the lookout for opportunities to make an impact on the adventure, not chances to take blind risks. If you're not sure what the outcome of a potential action might be, reconsider the action.

## Remember Who Your Friends Are

No matter what sort of beguiler you are, the key to a long and successful career lies in working well with your allies. These are the people who can help you finish what you start and who can pull your fat out of the fire when things don't go according to plan.

**The Party's Main Warrior:** This character's job is to carry the fight to the enemy and protect more vulnerable party members -- such as yourself. Your relationship with this character depends on the role you've assumed in your group -- it always pays, however, to work with this character before an adventure starts to minimize the chance that you'll get in each other's way. No matter what your style of play, always try to keep a fighting ally close at hand. You never know when you'll need that character's physical prowess and fighting skills.

If your talents lean toward negotiation or subtle influence, try to persuade a fighting ally to let you have a shot at using your influence before open hostilities commence. When possible, agree in advance that the party will try the subtle approach first. Make sure, however, that your fighting ally can recognize the sorts of opponents you aren't good at influencing, such as mindless vermin and oozes, undead creatures, and constructs.

**The Party's Main Scout:** It's possible you could fill this role in your party, especially if you have loaded up on stealth skills or if you like to cloak yourself with spells. If there's a rogue, monk, or other stealthy character in your group, be ready to work with the character. If you're stealthy yourself, you might accompany the scout on

reconnaissance trips, either as a second pair of eyes and ears, or perhaps a few steps back where you can provide support or a quick rescue if things go sour. In any case, do your best to keep track of what the scout is doing so that you can react quickly to whatever the scout uncovers.

**The Party's Arcane Spellcaster:** You are an arcane spellcaster yourself but perhaps not the only one in your group. If you have an arcane spellcasting ally, be sure the character is aware of your strengths and limitations. You can handle most magical information gathering with spells such as *detect thoughts*, *clairaudience*, *clairvoyance*, or *true seeing*. You also are a master of the subtle attack spell, such as *charm person*, *vertigo*, or *confusion*. Encourage your arcane ally to load up on useful spells that aren't on your class list, such as *fireball*, *fly*, and other spells that provide offensive punch or utility.

**The Party's Divine Spellcaster:** Get friendly and stay friendly with your party's cleric, druid, or paladin. This character's healing spells can stave off death, especially if you manage to get yourself poisoned or suffer from some other debilitating attack. You may find that divine spellcasters cramp your style a little (especially when they're straight arrows and you have a larcenous streak), but make an effort to stay in their good graces.

## Some Key Equipment

Your gear is nearly as important to you as your spells, so don't neglect it. Here are some essentials:

- **Armor:** You have access to many defensive spells, but nothing beats armor for a cheap, reliable Armor Class boost. Buy the best light armor you can afford. That usually means studded leather armor, but you can wear a chain shirt if you can afford it. As your wealth increases, consider mithral armor.

Don't overlook other defensive items such as *rings of protection* and *amulets of natural armor*. Keep in mind that several lesser items that stack together give you better protection, and at a cheaper price, than one big item.

- **Melee Weapon:** You're not very good in hand to hand combat, but you will find yourself in melee often if you are aggressive about using your cloaked casting and surprise casting class features. You have access to two martial melee weapons -- the short sword and the rapier. You won't regret using either of those. A spear, however, deals more damage than either a short sword or rapier, and you can throw it if the need arises.
- **Ranged Weapon:** An arrow from a shortbow can prove as effective as a low-level attack spell, and your spells won't work against some opponents. Use your bow when no other option presents itself.
- **Backup Spells:** A few extra spells will come in handy from time to time. Consider keeping useful spells that you don't cast very often on scrolls. That way, you can save your daily spell allotment for spells that can help you win or survive a battle. Backup scroll spells might include *detect secret doors*, *knock*, and *freedom of movement*.

If you have a decent Charisma score and a few extra skill points to spend, consider getting a few ranks in the Use Magic Device skill. This will allow you to take advantage of stored spells, especially from scrolls and wands, that you couldn't otherwise use. A wand of *magic missiles* or a scroll of *phantom steed* can give you a nice edge if you can manage to activate them.

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## About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of

the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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